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College Campuses Will Get Immediate Emergency Warnings Under New Higher Education Law Signed By President Bush

Washington, DC-Colleges will now be required to “immediately notify” their students and staff upon confirmation of a significant emergency on campus, such as an active shooter situation, under higher education legislation signed into law Thursday by President George W. Bush. The move follows calls for faster action after shootings at several campuses across the country, including the deaths of 32 students and employees at Virginia Tech in 2007.

“Immediate notification of an emergency will empower students and employees to better be able to protect themselves and save lives,” said Jonathan Kassa, the Executive Director of Security On Campus, Inc. a national non-profit organization that worked with both families of the Virginia Tech shooting victims and campus law enforcement to help develop the new warning provision.

This provision “will go a long way to make our nation’s campuses and students safer and improve colleges’ readiness and in the event of emergencies,” added U.S. Representative Carolyn McCarthy (NY-4), one of the leading proponents of the measure in Congress. “Using both high and low tech means, many institutions across the country have already adopted this approach and are issuing campuswide emergency notifications.”

The new provision, adopted as an amendment to the Jeanne Clery Act campus crime reporting law, also calls for colleges to test and publicize their emergency response and evacuation procedures once a year. Other campus safety measures in the new law include a federal matching grants program to fund campus emergency response and notification improvements, an expansion of the reporting of hate crime statistics, and new fire safety reporting requirements.

Security On Campus, Inc. (SOC) was founded in 1987 by Jeanne Clery's parents Connie & Howard after she was raped and murdered in her on-campus residence hall at college, by a fellow student whom she didn't know. SOC worked to secure passage of the Jeanne Clery Act, originally known as the Campus Security Act, in 1990 and continues to be the nation's leading voice for the improvement of campus safety. SOC is headquartered in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania.

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